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### Unit Watch

In addition to the programmatically driven risk mitigation efforts, the entire unit benefits from the proactive posture of the command watch. This watch provides a single point for the public to report marine safety and security incidents.

Upon receipt of such reports, the watchstander can easily coordinate a timely response to emergent incidents among all unit departments as well as with other local Coast Guard units, state agencies and local authorities. The watch is involved with over 2000 events per year. These events vary from reports of minor pollution incidents, to major vessel casualties, to handling tribal fishery net disputes, to coordinating a response to a reported security incident.

Over the last year, the watch center underwent a major reconfiguration to collocate the Marine Safety Office watch center, the Vessel Traffic Service watch center and the Group Seattle watch center. The benefits of this combination of watch centers and resources continue to be realized daily, but the most evident benefit thus far has been the improvement in the ability of all watchstanders to maintain accurate situational awareness of the activities ongoing throughout the Puget Sound area.

### Port Response Assets

#### Tugs

Another important risk mitigation strategy used frequently in Puget Sound is the aggressive deployment of tugs to escort or, assist, as needed, vessels with reduced maneuverability. Aggressively requiring the use of tugs to escort, and assist as required, for vessels with diminished maneuverability has markedly reduced risk. The COTP tug fund provided by the Washington State Legislature is an excellent tool that needs to be refined by the establishment of criteria to ensure proper use.

#### Passenger Vessels

Anyone familiar with the Puget Sound will undoubtedly think of WSF vessels when they consider the variety of ships that sail on it. WSF vessels make over 500 transits daily throughout the Puget Sound Region and therefore their availability to respond to casualty scenarios is extremely good. In fact, more often than not WSF vessels themselves initiate responses as first on scene to incidents

throughout the Sound. WSF also operates two high speed passenger ferries further enhancing their capability to provide assistance anywhere within the Puget Sound.

The Clipper ships that operate daily between Seattle and Victoria are a constant presence in Puget Sound and cover an enormous area that includes both U.S. and Canadian waters, where many recreational and commercial vessels transit.

Argosy Cruises operates a variety of tours in and around Seattle and provides an assortment of platforms for notification, support and response during incidents.

### **Vessel Traffic Service**

The Sector Operators provide invaluable help when organizing a response to a casualty, by providing a communications link to the vessel, as well as radar-based information on the vessel's location. The operator also assists in responses by advising nearby vessels of the situation so that they may steer clear and avoid an additional casualty.

## **Casualty Response**

When casualties occur, the MSO takes action to limit the injury to people, as well as limit the damage to the environment and the vessel. The following sampling demonstrates some recent MSO Puget Sound responses:

### **Extreme List of Moored Container Vessel**

While moored at Terminal 5 in Seattle, a 660-foot foreign flagged container ship rapidly developed a 27-degree list during ballast operations. This office responded and lead the 16 plus hour response effort to right the vessel and avoid catastrophic capsize and closure of one of the west coast's busiest container terminals.

### **Tanker and Towing Vessel Collision**

While transiting in confined waters, an escort tug crossed the bow of an oil tanker, which resulted in a collision of the two vessels. Only minor injuries were sustained aboard the tug when it rolled nearly 60 degrees before righting and passing down the side of the tanker. The tanker sustained minor structural damage. Marine inspectors and investigators from this office responded to ensure complete damage assessment and repairs were made prior being cleared for unrestricted operations.

### **Cruise Ship and Towing Vessel Collision**

Despite making passing arrangements and fully disclosing their intentions to one another, a cruise ship and tug with barge collided in open water under conditions of good visibility.

### **Yacht Club Fires**

The Seattle Yacht Club and Lake Union marina fires were both significant events involving the sinking of over 40 yachts, significant pier and structural damage to the marinas, and pollution and salvage response efforts totaling over \$1 million in costs. MSO personnel worked side-by-side for extended periods with the Seattle Fire Department and other local agencies, industry response personnel, owners and the public

to ensure a safe and efficient response. Prompt action was taken to contain, secure the source, and recover the released oil, and salvage the recreational vessels involved in these significant marina fires.

## **Oil Spills**

In response to a 600 gallon oil spill from the M/V GAZ DIAMOND, MSO personnel established a command post and coordinated with State and local agencies to develop a unified command. The response organization ensured the safety of the public and responders, protected environmentally sensitive areas, contained and recovered spilled oil and monitored the clean up of miles of beaches. Pollution investigators found the cause of the spill and actions were taken against the vessel to ensure future compliance with pollution prevention regulations.

During responses to actual and potential oil spills and hazardous materials releases, MSO personnel ensure that responsible parties take immediate corrective action. If no action is taken or the responsible party cannot be identified, the MSO secures response resources to clean up or otherwise mitigate the situation.

## **Preparedness**

An important part of Response strategies are the planning efforts that ensure that the Coast Guard, as well as industry and other agencies are prepared when disaster strikes.

### **Cruise Ship Terminal Security Meetings**

The plan for additional cruise ship operations at Terminal 30 in 2003 presented new challenges and increased the need for greater coordination with the cruise ship industry in Seattle. Participation of industry, federal services, Canadian representatives, local law enforcement and involved Coast Guard resources discussed and prepared for 2003 Cruise season and established consistent standards and plans for security operations.

### **Northwest Area Committee (NWAC)**

Participation in the NWAC, whose purpose is to minimize the consequences of an oil spill or hazardous materials release (particularly larger scale incidents) through a planning process that includes a number of workgroups and committees under the National Contingency Plan and Northwest Area Contingency Plan, is an important part of this strategy. To ensure preparedness, the MSO:

- Ensures that the objectives of the NWAC are aligned with the perceived risk, and that progress is made on those objectives.
- Evaluates and participates in oil spill drills required by state and federal regulations.
- Conducts outreach with county Marine Resource Committees and similar groups.
- Promote agreement and understanding within the response community of the basic priorities and procedures common to all spills.
- Provides Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training to other Coast Guard units in Puget Sound.

- Maintains pollution response trailers in remote locations, and provide Coast Guard Small Boat Stations with response resources.
- Ensures the readiness of the response system, including Oil Spill Response Organizations (OSROs), and cooperatives.

### **Exercises**

As discussed in Chapter 5, exercises are critical elements to preparing for response and are a critical prevention strategy for continued risk reduction efforts.